

BACKGROUNDER NO. 1-0557
RUSSELL SPLANE/ATLANTA

APRIL 12, 1976

CENTER FOR DISEASE CONTROL
(INSERTS IN TAPE LIBRARY)

ANNCR:

THE U.S. GOVERNMENT LABORATORY WHICH POSITIVELY IDENTIFIED A POSSIBLY DANGEROUS INFLUENZA STRAIN THAT APPEARED SUDDENLY IN THE UNITED STATES EARLY THIS YEAR, IS NOW HELPING TO PLAN A NATIONWIDE VACCINATION PROGRAM. THE FLU DISCOVERED THIS YEAR IS SIMILAR TO THAT WHICH TOOK TWENTY MILLION LIVES IN A WORLDWIDE EPIDEMIC IN 1918. VOA CORRESPONDENT RUSSELL SPLANE VISITED THE INSTALLATION IN ATLANTA, GEORGIA AND SENDS THIS BACKGROUND REPORT.

VOICE:

PRESIDENT FORD'S CALL FOR A NATIONAL IMMUNIZATION PROGRAM TO COMBAT THE SO-CALLED SWINE FLU WAS MADE LARGELY BECAUSE OF FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE U.S. CENTER FOR DISEASE CONTROL IN ATLANTA, GEORGIA. SINCE THE PRESIDENT HAS STARTED THE PLAN IN MOTION, THE C.D.C., AS IT'S CALLED, IS NOT WAITING FOR THE CONGRESS TO COMPLETE ITS APPROVAL OF THE PROPOSAL. THE CENTER ALREADY IS BUSY DRAWING UP PLANS TO SUPERVISE AND TEST THE PROPOSED VACCINE AND TO STANDARDIZE AND COORDINATE THE WORK OF STATE HEALTH DEPARTMENTS WHO WILL HAVE THE HERCULEAN JOB OF IMMUNIZING NEARLY THE WHOLE AMERICAN POPULATION AGAINST THIS NEW INFLUENZA THREAT.

THE CENTER FOR DISEASE CONTROL WAS CREATED NEARLY THIRTY YEARS AGO, AS AN OUTGROWTH OF THE WARTIME AGENCY SET UP TO CONTROL MALARIA. THE CENTER'S SCOPE HAS BEEN ENLARGED GREATLY OVER THE YEARS, BUT COMMUNICABLE

DISEASES -- AND INFLUENZA IS ONE -- ARE STILL ONE OF ITS MAJOR CONCERNS. THUS, AFTER SOME SOLDIERS AT FORT DIX IN NEW JERSEY BECAME ILL WITH AN UNIDENTIFIABLE VIRUS, THE STATE HEALTH AUTHORITIES SENT SERUM SAMPLES TO C.D.C. IN ATLANTA FOR HELP. CULTURES WERE DEVELOPED AND EXAMINED WITH THE CENTER'S SOPHISTICATED EQUIPMENT, INCLUDING POWERFUL ELECTRON MICROSCOPES.

UNDENIABLY, THE SURPRISED SCIENTISTS CONCLUDED, IT'S SWINE INFLUENZA -- THE STRAIN THAT PRODUCED THE DEVASTATING NINETEEN EIGHTEEN EPIDEMIC. THE DATA WAS REVIEWED EARLY IN MARCH BY A PANEL OF EXPERTS IN A SERIES OF SPECIAL MEETINGS. THEY CONCLUDED THAT THEY WOULD HAVE TO RECOMMEND THE MASS VACCINATION PROGRAM. DOCTOR GARY NOBLE, VIROLOGIST AT C.D.C., EXPLAINED THAT INFLUENZA STRAINS UNDERGO CHANGES OVER THE YEARS, AND THERE'S NO GUARANTEE THAT THE NEW OUTBREAK IS EXACTLY LIKE IT WAS IN NINETEEN EIGHTEEN, BUT THERE'S NO QUESTION IT'S THE SAME FAMILY.

TAPE CUT ONE -- NOBLE

"I THINK ONE HAS TO CONSIDER THE POTENTIAL THAT THIS VIRUS MIGHT RESEMBLE THE VIRUS CAUSING THE NINETEEN EIGHTEEN EPIDEMIC, AND I THINK IT IS THIS THREAT WHICH LEADS TO MOST OF OUR CONCERN."

VOICE:

WILL THE PROPOSED VACCINATION PROGRAM GUARANTEE THAT THERE WILL BE NO EPIDEMIC?

TAPE: CUT TWO -- NOBLE

"THERE'S NEVER BEEN SUCH AN UNDERTAKING BEFORE, AND WE CAN'T SAY FROM PRIOR EXPERIENCE THAT WE CAN PREVENT AN EPIDEMIC BY VACCINATING THE ENTIRE POPULATION. HOWEVER,

TAPE:
(CONT'D)

IT'S KNOWN FROM NATURAL EPIDEMICS THAT IF MOST OF THE POPULATION HAS DEVELOPED IMMUNITY, YOU WILL PREVENT A MAJOR EPIDEMIC. YOU MAY STILL HAVE CASES OF INFLUENZA OCCURRING DESPITE WIDE IMMUNIZATION, BUT CERTAINLY I THINK IT WAS LOGICAL TO ASSUME THAT A MAJOR EPIDEMIC COULD BE AVERTED."

VOICE:

THAT WAS DOCTOR GARY NOBLE AT THE U.S. CENTER
FOR DISEASE CONTROL IN ATLANTA, GEORGIA.

JS/PBM